
Queen Elizabeth's School

ANNUAL EQUALITIES UPDATE

Introduction

Queen Elizabeth's School believes that excellence is enabled through recognising the value of every individual. The School aims to create an environment that respects the diversity of staff and pupils from all different backgrounds and allows them to achieve their full potential, to contribute fully, and to derive maximum benefit and enjoyment from their involvement in the life of the School.

The School also works to ensure equality of opportunity, supporting those with additional needs and affirming a meritocratic approach to admissions, recruitment and reward.

The School takes seriously its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, complying with its requirements to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

This report sets out some of the steps taken by the School over the past year in support of the Equality Act 2010 and provides an update with regards to the fulfilment of the School's own specific equality objectives, as confirmed by the Governing Body in February 2019.

To gain a fuller understanding of the School's approach and procedures with regards to equalities, this report should be read in conjunction with, among other documents, the School's Equal Opportunities Policy, SEND Policy, Safeguarding Policy, and Bullying Policy, as well as procedures for admissions, recruitment, performance management, and disciplinary matters.

Meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty

- Related policies were updated to further promote equality and diversity. For example:
 - A new Relationships & Sex Education Policy was introduced, alongside a new curriculum constructed to meet new statutory requirements and enhance provision. This was informed by thorough pupil and parent consultation and took effect from September 2020. This curriculum seeks to support mutual understanding of those with protected characteristics and those without.
 - A revised Uniform Policy has been tabled to governors, rewording the section on hair styles to avoid potential discrimination against those with afro hair.
- A new Accessibility Plan has been adopted by the Governing Body, setting out what actions are being taken to support the accessibility of the curriculum, the wider QE experience and the site for those with barriers and additional needs. In addition to the ongoing strategies contained within the plan, progress has been made on the implementation by:
 - Improving access within the Fern building via the atrium, installation of magnetic-lock doors and decluttering;

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- Securing further Condition Improvement Funding for more works in the Fern building;
- Improving access to the pool gallery and weights room, by bringing the lift back into service;
- Adding high visibility strips to staircases, to support those with visual impairment.
- Procedures relating to the circumstances under which candidates can use word processors in public examinations have also been reviewed, to ensure both that pupils with disabilities are able to fulfil their potential and that the integrity of the exam system is upheld.
- Reasonable adjustments were implemented with respect to the entrance examination for candidates with SEND to support the meritocratic process, including one-to-one and small group invigilation, with staff apprised of individual needs.
- Equality was promoted through the curriculum, notably Personal Development Time – the pastoral curriculum delivered in form time and year group assemblies.
- The PDT curriculum was supported by input from external speakers and organisations, for example: Tender (a charity working to end abuse) who explored gender equality, healthy relationships and domestic abuse; Positive Voices, a programme run by the Terrence Higgins Trust, who dealt with the challenges and stigma around HIV; representatives from Kooth spoke to boys in years 7 and 8 regarding mental health awareness; the boys were invited to take part in the virtual diversity week led by 'just like us for schools' during lockdown where they could engage with virtual talks, Q&As and competitions centralised around championing equality for LGBTQ+; Jess Amery, from the Wise Thoughts organisation, spoke to boys in Years 11-13 about LGBT issues and the challenges faced by those in this community; and a representative from the organisation Protection Approaches spoke to Years 12 & 13 about Holocaust Memorial Day, raising awareness of the Holocaust whilst also drawing parallels to many of the prejudices and discrimination that exists in modern day society.
- Old Elizabethans have also contributed to discussions, particularly on race and racial injustice in the wake of the killing of George Floyd in the US and the international Black Lives Matter movement – participating in online group discussions facilitated by the School and supplying material to aid discussion in form groups.
- A new forum called Perspective was established by senior prefects, supported by staff, to promote and facilitate open dialogue about global and societal issues such as racism. A new section of eQE was established to host materials and discussion threads. The range of issues has expanded covering such matters as Pride and the Gender & Sexual Minorities community, and the oppression of religious minorities in other parts of the world.
- The peer mentoring system, which covers both academic and pastoral issues, saw older boys support their younger peers with a range of concerns, including some which touched upon anxieties connected to identity and equality. Peer mentors have been trained in how to conduct mentoring meetings online using MS Teams, with face-to-face meetings between those in other year groups not possible whilst Covid-19 management measures are required.
- Through their charitable and voluntary service activities, pupils in the Sixth Form advanced equality of opportunity and the fostering of good relations in the local community, for example by supporting people with disabilities in healthcare and educational settings.
- Academic symposia held jointly with local girls' schools (North London Collegiate and Henrietta Barnett School) fostered respect between boys and girls.
- Staff training included specialist autism training, to support those pupils with additional needs.
- The School counsellor, a service delivered in partnership with local charity Rephael House, maintained her increased hours at the School, enabling her to engage with more pupils, and run a

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drop-in clinic at break and lunchtimes to help triage those feeling in need of support. Appointments were delivered using video-conferencing technology during the period of school closure.

- During the Covid-19 pandemic the School worked with members of staff at increased risk, due to characteristics, such as age, race, disability, or pregnancy, to support them, for example by discussing and agreeing with them their level of involvement in the on-site supervision rota during lockdown, or making reasonable adjustments to their working environment, where deemed appropriate by risk assessment.

Our equality objectives

In this section work towards meeting the School's five established equality objectives will be highlighted. Progress towards achieving these aims will be regularly monitored and reported at least annually. The following objectives were set by the Governing Body in February 2019.

1. Reduce any attainment gap between pupils of different ethnicities in English (and other essay-writing subjects), relating to around half of all pupils not having English as their first language.

About 92% of the current School pupil population are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and around 45% are advanced bilingual learners, where English is not their first language. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is incredibly high, with 82% of GCSEs taken in summer 2020 awarded 9 or 8 (the equivalent of an A* under the old system). The spread in results is wider in English than in many other subjects (notably Maths and the Sciences), with fewer pupils obtaining the highest grade 9 and more gaining grade 6 or below than in most other subjects. It should be noted, though, that data from previous years indicates that pupils with English as an additional language achieved and progressed to an equal or greater degree than those with English as a first language. Work has nevertheless been undertaken to provide additional support in order to ensure equal opportunity for high attainment.

- An extra English lesson per week was introduced in 2019-20, allowing increased curricular time for the development of advanced literacy and written communication skills. Specifically, in Year 11 all pupils have an extra 35 minute period (6 periods rather than 5 periods) and in Year 10 pupils in sets 7-8 English have an additional double lesson (so 7 periods compared to 5 periods for those in sets 1-6);
- A focus upon the accurate use of specific and technical terminology (known as disciplinary literacy) in lessons and assessed work in the new Lower School schemes of work, as well as at GCSE and A-level, across all subject areas, as part of a wider drive on literacy;
- Learning walks have been conducted by members of the Senior Leadership Team to look at the use of written and spoken language in lessons. Heads of Subject and the Head of English will be continuing with these looking at: the use of correct terminology; the use of full sentences when communicating in class; the nature of reading in class, given that most reading is now done for homework so that lessons are more discursive with the subject expert; any literacy misconceptions which exist in certain subjects.
- Additional intervention classes for pupils in Year 11 not on track to make the expected progress or attainment level in English, supported by the work of subject clinics available to pupils of all ages across all subjects; and
- Literacy drafted as a core theme into the School's Development Priorities for 2021-25.

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2. Reduce the attainment gap between those pupils in receipt of pupil premium and their cohort at large at GCSE.

Disadvantaged pupils also perform very highly at the School. Performance data was not published by the DfE this year, due to the cancellation of summer exams and grades being awarded via a combination of Centre Assessed Grades and exam board calculated grades (using an algorithm). However, analysis of destinations for those pupil premium pupils leaving the School at the end of Year 13 in 2020 shows the following universities and courses:

- Universities: Bath, Cambridge, Edinburgh, King's College (London) x2, Oxford, Nottingham x2, UCL
- Courses: Biomedical Sciences, Chemical Engineering, Computer Science x3, Economics, Engineering, History, Medicine

Fuller information on how those pupils who qualify for pupil premium are supported is set out in the annual Pupil Premium report, but strategies have included:

- Reducing the size of form groups in the Upper School, to enable more targeted and bespoke support;
- The provision of one-to-one, small group, and peer-to-peer tutoring, to give additional support to those at risk of falling behind in relation to their peers;
- Engaging specialist support, including a professional counselling service, for those pupils with social or emotional problems likely to impede their progress;
- A dedicated fund to enable disadvantaged pupils to participate in the full range of extra-curricular enrichment opportunities, providing equal opportunity to accrue their benefit;
- Enhanced use of digital technology to support learning and parental communication; and
- Supplying IT hardware to support participation in remote learning during the period of enforced School closure due to Covid-19.

3. Reduce further the incidence of the use of pejorative language by pupils in relation to race, gender and sexual orientation.

The number of cases involving racist, sexist or homophobic language remain low; however, continued effort is required to eliminate such instances. This year:

- The Personal Development Time programme, including the new Relationships & Sex Education curriculum, has sought to increase understanding and foster good relations, as outlined in other sections of this report;
- The use of language has been specifically considered as part of the PDT programme, supported by special assemblies from visiting organisations such as Wise Thoughts (re LGBTQ+) and Protection Approaches (re the Holocaust, antisemitism and modern injustice), as well as materials produced by alumni to support the marking of Black History Month;
- The Perspective forum, established following the international response to the killing of George Floyd, held discussions about racism and racist and discriminatory language, supported by Old Elizabethans who shared accounts from their own personal life experiences.

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4. Further foster tolerance, understanding and good relations between those in the School community with a protected characteristic and those without through the curriculum and pastoral support system.

Matters of equality are considered across the scope of the academic and pastoral curricular, notably through the Personal Development Time programme. The PDT curriculum has undergone a process of review, consultation and revision, so that:

- In Year 7 themes include diversity and respect, and bullying (including cyber-bullying, racism and homophobia);
- In Year 8 work includes the dangers of stereotyping, issues around consent, identifying biases, and being a role model to others;
- In Year 9 equality is studied alongside identity and sexuality, healthy relationships, and pornography and respect;
- In Year 10 there is additional focus on prejudice and tolerance, press freedoms, and an assembly on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM);
- In the Upper School (Years 11-13) there is further exploration of personal identity, modern relationships, respectful relationships, marriage and the law, body image, successful mental wellbeing, stereotyping and the media, and equality in the UK.

5. Increase pupil consultation and leadership on equalities issues, enabling them to better promote equality, diversity and inclusion among their peers.

In a diverse community it is important that pupils have the opportunity to be heard on issues of equality, but also for them to take responsibility for their own conduct and the example they set to their peers. Whether through the prefect system, vertical tutoring, leadership of extra-curricular activities, or just in their visibility to others, pupils can have a significant impact upon the attitudes and experiences of others. In support of this objective:

- Issues relating to equality and identity were on the agenda for the Year 7-11 pupil conference and formed much of the focus of the Sixth Form conference, through which pupils are able to provide feedback and suggestions to the School's Senior Leadership – with prior discussion having taken place in form groups in preparation for these events;
- Four Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Ambassadors were appointed to the senior prefect team for 2020 (increasing the number from three in 2019), tasked with promoting these values throughout the School and supporting awareness raising around issues such as mental health, sexuality and gender identity. The ambassadors have maintained a dedicated equalities noticeboard, held competitions reflecting upon diversity and equality, and helped co-ordinate celebration of occasions such as International Women's Day, Pride, and Black History month;
- Vice-Captains have established Perspective, a new eQE based forum to facilitate open dialogue among pupils around important societal issues, not least racism and injustice. The resources, covering a range of topics (including the gender and sexual minorities community), are designed to help pupils further educate themselves about these issues, building upon the work they do in PDT and their academic subjects, and to create a space for them to ask questions and express

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their views. The forum is open for all pupils and members of staff to post and get involved in the conversations.

Review:

This report on equalities at Queen Elizabeth's School was prepared in October 2020 and progress will be reviewed by the Governing Body again in November 2021, in line with a requirement for annual reporting.